

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CCO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 DOTE-00

H-02 INR-07 IO-13 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 SP-02

OC-06 PRS-01 SS-15 USIE-00 USSS-00 SY-05 FAA-00

WRD-01 MCT-01 PA-01 /082 W
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R 041140Z NOV 76

FM AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1407

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMCONLUATE MUNICH

AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

AMEMBASSY BERLIN

AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: PFOR GW CZ

SUBJECT: REACTIONS IN PRAGUE TO FRG HESITATION TO RETURN SKYJACKER

REF: MUNICH 2659

1. FRG AMBASSADOR RITZEL TOLD AMBASSADOR HE SEES POTENTIAL
ADVANTAGES THAT MIGHT BE WRUNG OUT OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK SKYJACKING
(REFTEL). FOR EXAMPLE, RITZEL BELIEVES IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE TO
EXPLOIT THE MATTER TO GAIN INCREASED CZECHOSLOVAK SUPPORT
FOR FRG-SPONSORED ITEM ON CONVENTION AGAINST TAKING HOSTAGES IN
CURRENT UNGA SESSION. HE ALSO BELIEVES THE SKYJACK WILL HELP
TURN ATTENTION AWAY FROM RECENT STRAINS CREATED BY THE FROLIK
AFFAIR (PRAGUE 3056). (COMMENT: RITZEL TENDS TO SEE SILVER
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LININGS. END COMMENT) ON THE OTHER HAND, RITZEL INDICATES

FRG EMBASSY HERE HAS RECEIVED CALL FROM ANONYMOUS CZECH CITIZEN THREATENING TO BOMB EMBASSY PROPERTY, IF THE GERMANS RETURN HE SKYJACKER TO PRAGUE.

2. FRG FIRST SECRETARY RUNGE TOLD DCM THAT GERMAN POLICE ARE CONVINCED THAT THE SKYJACKER, RUDOLPH BECVAR, HAS A CRIMINAL RECORD STRETCHING BACK TO THE TIME WHEN HE WAS SEVEN YEARS OF AGE. RUNGE BELIEVES FRG AUTHORITIES WILL BE ANXIOUS TO RETURN BECVAR TO CZECHOSLOVAKIA THE MOMENT THAT REQUIREMENTS OF GERMAN LAW ARE SATISFIED.

3. THROUGHOUT LAST WEEKEND CZECHOSLOVAK MEDIA GAVE EXTENSIVE COVERAGE TO HIJACKING OF CSA AIRCRAFT TO MUNICH OCT 28. INITIAL RUDE PRAVO REPORTAGE ON OCT 30 WAS STRAIGHT-FORWARD, BUT WAS ACCOMPANIED BY SHRILL EDITORIAL QUOTING BONNER RUNDSCHAU PLEA TO FRG TO BE UNDERSTANDING OF SKYJACKER'S ALLEGED POLITICAL MOTIVES AND REFERRING TO PAST INCIDENTS WHEN BONN HAD WELCOMED OR ONLY LIGHTLY PUNISHED CZECHOSLOVAK DEFECTORS WHO TOOK THE SKYJACKING ROUTE. EDITORIAL CONCLUDED THAT ONLY GOC COURTS CAN RULE JUSTLY ON PUNISHMENT OF SKYJACKER.

4. SATURDAY AND SUNDAY TV NEWS CARRIED EXTENSIVE COVERAGE OF INCIDENT, INCLUDING INTERVIEWS WITH PASSENGERS AND CREW OF HIJACKED AIRCRAFT AND EDITORIAL COMMENTARY, WITH CREW MEMBERS COACHED TO NOTE MILDNESS OF PUNISHMENT FRG HAS GIVEN IN PAST SKYJACKING CASES AND TO DEMAND RETURN OF SKYJACKER TO GOC JUSTICE. OCT 31 LATE EVENING TV NEWS AND NOV 1 PRESS CENTERED THEIR COVERAGE ON CALL BY UNSERE ZEIT, FRG CP DAILY, FOR RETURN OF SKYJACKER, WHICH FOCUSED ON DAMAGE TO BILATERAL RELATIONS CAUSED BY PREVIOUS INCIDENTS OF FRG LENIENCY TOWARD AERIAL ESCAPADES/DEFLECTIONS FROM CSSR. MOST RECENT COVERAGE CENTERS AROUND FRG PRESS COMMENTARY ON HANDLING OF EXTRADITION ISSUE.

5. COMMENT: WE ARE STRUCK BY CONTRAST UP TO NOW BETWEEN GOC AND LOCAL MEDIA HANDLING OF CASE. MFA NOTE REQUESTING EXTRADITION OF SKYJACKER, AS QUOTED IN PRESS, WAS CORRECT IN TONE AND INCLUDED EXPRESSION OF APPRECIATION TO FRG FOR QUICK RETURN OF AIRCRAFT, PASSENGERS AND CREW. PRESUMABLY, GOC IS SIGNALING OFFICIAL DESIRE NOT TO LET INCIDENT MAR RELATIONS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WITH FRG, WHILE LETTING THE MEDIA CARRY THE MESSAGE THAT "PUBLIC OPINION" MAY REQUIRE DISPLAY OF OFFICIAL DISPLEASURE OF SKYJACKER NOT RETURNED HERE FOR TRIAL AND PUNISHMENT.

6. WE ARE ALSO STRUCK BY THE POSSIBILITY THAT REPEATED MEDIA STATEMENTS MORE OR LESS BADLY INDICATING THAT IF SKYJACKER RETURNED HERE FOR TRIAL HE IS CERTAIN TO BE CONVICTED AND GIVEN MAXIMUM SENTENCE MAY BE BUILDING A PRIMA FACIE CASE THAT HE

CANNOT RECEIVE FAIR TRIAL HERE--WHICH WOULD FURTHER COMPLICATE
DECISION FRG MUST MAKE ON WHETHER TO RETURN HIM.

7. IN LATEST DEVELOPMENT, FIRST SECRETARY RUNGE TOLD
US LATE NOVEMBER 2 THAT FRG EMBASSY WAS GIVEN A PROTEST
NOTE BY A GROUP OF 12 CZECHS DEMANDING THE RETURN OF BECVAR.
RUNGE SAID HIS EMBASSY HAD NOT RECEIVED ANY OFFICIAL PROTESTS
FROM THE FOREIGN MINISTRY.
BYRNE

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